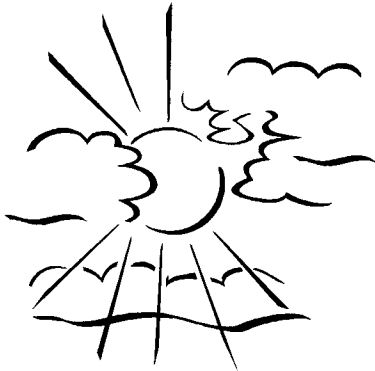


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Thursday, November 17, 2005

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Michigan's unemployment rate falls to 6.1%

November 17, 2005

BY ALEJANDRO BODIPO-MEMBA
FREE PRESS BUSINESS WRITER

Michigan's unemployment figure fell to 6.1% in October, the lowest level for the state since September 2002.

But economists remain concerned that relatively few jobs are being created in the state.

The Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth said the number of unemployed people dropped by 24,000 from September when the rate was 6.5%. The rate in October 2004 was 7.2%.

October saw the third straight monthly decline in the unemployment rate in Michigan. The last time Michigan's jobless rate fell three consecutive months was from December 1999 to February 2000.

"It certainly has been some time since the state's jobless rate has fallen three months, which is a positive development," said Bruce Weaver, an economic analyst with the Department of Labor.

"But on the other hand, employment really didn't increase in October."

Employment in the professional and business services sector increased modestly in October. In addition, education and health services were the engines that have driven the modest employment growth that Michigan has experienced over the last year.

While the news appears to be encouraging on the labor front, there remains concern on the job creation side of the ledger.

Despite the decline, Michigan's jobless rate is still expected to rank among the worst in the country when the state-by-state comparison figures are reported later this month. The national unemployment rate for October was 5%.

"This couldn't be a harder report to talk about, because the unemployment rate is declining for the wrong reasons," said Dana Johnson, chief economist with **Comerica Inc.** "Michigan's labor force is shrinking because more people have given up looking for work. The ongoing trend is the continue shrinking of jobs in Michigan, which isn't good."

Johnson points to the manufacturing employment decline due to temporary layoffs in the automotive sector. In addition, Michigan payroll jobs fell by 14,000 to 4.35 million in October. The decline was highlighted by a loss of 8,000 government sector jobs.

"The fact that the rate has fallen three consecutive months is very positive," Weaver said. "But we certainly are looking to see if the state can generate any sustained gains in payroll jobs as well."

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Thursday, November 17, 2005

Michigan's jobless rate falls to 6.1%

Economists say decline shows fewer people are looking for jobs, not that state is turning around.

By Louis Aguilar / The Detroit News

Michigan's unemployment rate dropped to 6.1 percent in October -- the lowest level in over three years -- but economists say the decline doesn't signal a turnaround in the state's sluggish economy.

The jobless rate fell because the state's labor force -- made up of employed and jobless workers collecting unemployment benefits -- shrank by 26,000 last month, an indication that many people stopped looking for work or ran out of unemployment benefits.

"The unemployment rate is going down for the wrong reason," said Dana Johnson, chief economist for Comerica Inc. "Fewer people are looking for jobs rather than more jobs being created. There is not any reason to believe the labor market is strengthening. Jobs are down 1 percent from a year ago."

Many workers disappearing from the state's workforce are in Metro Detroit. Ju'wan Portland of Detroit is among them.

The 28-year-old has officially been out of work since January after leaving a Best Buy sales position. "I just do under-the-table work now, like a lot of guys," said Portland, who can make about \$400 on a good week.

Portland works construction and transports the children of working single mothers from school to their homes in his northwest Detroit neighborhood.

"What I do now is more fulfilling than trying to sell people DVDs and sound systems," he said.

"The pay is about the same, too."

Because Portland doesn't have an official job and because he doesn't collect unemployment insurance benefits, he's not counted among Michigan's labor force.

The state said 24,000 workers left the unemployment ranks in October compared to September, and 2,000 jobs were eliminated last month.

"That's a hemorrhaging," said Patrick Anderson, principal economist for Anderson Economic Group in Lansing. "October was one of the bleakest months in the auto industry."

Troy-based Delphi Corp., North America's largest auto supplier, filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy on Oct. 9. The bankruptcy is expected to spark massive job cuts and plant closures and eventually cost the state \$10 billion in lost wages and corporate profits, Anderson contends.

"(October) no doubt discouraged a good chunk of workers," Anderson said. "But I can't imagine 26,000 leaving Michigan in one month."

There were no significant job gains in any sector in October, according to the state data.

Manufacturing employment, the bread and butter of Michigan's economy, dropped by 2,000 last month and has fallen by 22,000 since Oct. 2004.

Government employment fell the most last month, with 8,000 jobs lost. The professional and business services sector gained the most -- 2,000 positions -- yet still shows a loss of 3,000 jobs from a year ago.

Metro Detroit's official labor force dropped by 28,000 in October compared to September, and has dropped by 14,000 since October 2004.

Like the state's jobless rate, the region's unemployment rate is dropping -- yet there is no net gain of jobs.

There were 15,000 fewer workers in the region in October compared to September. Metro Detroit's jobless rate fell to 6.1 in October, the same as the statewide rate. The national jobless rate stood at 5.0 percent in October.

Larry Bagley, 42, is another Metro Detroiter who may not be among the official labor force. He worked several temp jobs during October, but didn't collect unemployment, leaving him in a statistical gray area. The last full-time job he held was back in December for a small gear manufacturer in Mount Clemens, which shut its doors after 65 years, he said.

"It's a financial roller coaster," he said "I applied for security guard work last year and some of the other applicants were engineers and tool-and-die guys. It was scary."

Job growth at a "subpar rate" of about 1.1 to 1.2 percent through 2007 has been forecast by economists at the University of Michigan's Research Seminar in Quantitative Economics. That amounts to about 47,200 new jobs next year and 52,500 in 2007.

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November 17, 2005

STATE UNEMPLOYMENT RATE FALLS

Michigan's unemployment rate fell in October to 6.1 percent, from 6.5 percent, the Department of Labor and Economic Growth announced Wednesday.

The state rate is still above the national rate of 5 percent, but is more than 1 percentage point lower than it was during the same time in 2004. After three consecutive monthly declines, it stands at its lowest since September 2002.

"The last time the state's jobless rate fell for three consecutive months was from December 1999 to February 2000," Rick Waclawek, director of DLEG's Bureau of Labor Market Information and Strategic Initiatives said in a statement.

Unemployment numbers show that a reduction in the number of people active in the state's labor force contributed to the lower jobless rate in October. Youth in the labor force has continued to remain stagnant throughout the year, the report indicates.

Also, a monthly survey of employers showed that payroll jobs in the state declined by 14,000 in October, bringing the total to 4,348,000. Most of the job loss occurred in the government sector, with lesser declines seen in the education and health services industries, as well as trade, transportation and utilities.

Other industry categories posted minor increases or declines in their job totals.

A spokesperson for the Michigan Republican Party said the figures cannot mask the fact that the state is still losing jobs.

MIRS

November 16, 2005

Jobless Rate Falls To 6.1%

Michigan's unemployment rate in October fell by four-tenths of a percentage point to 6.1 percent (September's rate was revised upward by one-tenth of a percentage point from 6.4 to 6.5 percent), marking the first time in more than five years the state's unemployment level has dropped three straight months.

Michigan's October 2005 jobless rate dropped by more than one percentage point from the October 2004 rate of 7.2 percent. In the same period, the national jobless rate decreased by half a percentage point. The state's unemployment rate was over a percentage point above the October 2005 national rate of five percent, according to data released by the Department of Labor & Economic Growth (DLEG).

"The state's unemployment rate has declined over the past year," said Rick **WACLAWEK**, director of DLEG's Bureau of Labor Market Information and Strategic Initiatives. "October marked the third consecutive monthly jobless rate reduction in Michigan. The last time the state's jobless rate fell for three consecutive months was from December 1999 to February 2000."

Officials say it should be noted that a fall in the labor force contributed to the lower October jobless rate. Unemployment declined by 24,000 while total employment was little changed, edging down by 2,000. As a result, the state's labor force trended downward over the month by 26,000. The state labor force has been flat over the past year, particularly among youth.

Still, Michigan's October unemployment rate was the lowest for the state since September 2002. Since October 2004, unemployment fell in Michigan by 55,000 or 15 percent, which outpaced the nationwide decrease of eight percent in the same period.

Meanwhile, Michigan's October Payroll jobs edged downward.

According to the monthly survey of employers, seasonally adjusted Michigan payroll jobs declined by 14,000 in October to total 4,348,000. The most significant over-the-month job losses occurred in government (-8,000). Lesser declines were recorded in education and health services (-3,000) and trade, transportation and utilities (-3,000). All other major industry categories posted relatively minor gains or declines in their respective job totals over the month.

October's total payroll job decline was the first monthly decrease since July. Manufacturing employment declined somewhat over the month, reflecting minor, temporary layoffs in the auto sector.

Employment in the professional and business services sector increased slightly over the month, which continued this job category's upward trend throughout 2005.

Even with an employment decline over the month, education and health services continues to be the state's primary growth sector over the past year. Other sectors that displayed notable gains since October 2004 include financial activities and the “other services” category.

Since October 2004, most of the statewide payroll job declines were recorded in three sectors, manufacturing, government, and trade, transportation and utilities. Within trade, transportation and utilities, the retail trade sector recorded the vast majority of job losses.

November 16, 2005

GRANHOLM, CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION PUSH JOBS PLAN

Federal action on tariffs, health care and pensions will help domestic manufacturers in their competition against foreign rivals, said Governor Jennifer Granholm and members of the Michigan Congressional delegation following an hour-long meeting in Washington.

Among the tangible results of the meeting was a bipartisan letter that the delegation will send to U.S. Trade Representative Rob Portman to argue against phasing out a 25 percent tariff on trucks built in Thailand.

Mr. Granholm said all participants at the meeting agreed to work on ensuring fair trade for U.S. companies including legislation to prevent counterfeiting and currency manipulation by China and Japan, developing legislation to reduce health care costs for manufacturers including insurance pools for catastrophic health care costs, and ensuring pension legislation that is to be developed in Congress does not harm Michigan's major companies.

She said she would be taking the outlines of that agenda to other governors to help build more broad based support. The governor also said the delegation will push for federal funds for health care information technology.

"We are on the edge of an economic storm. If there are going to be American-made products in the global marketplace tomorrow, we have to support our American manufacturing community today," Ms. Granholm said.

Republican members of the delegation said there is more the state should be doing as well to help its industries through tax relief and targeted assistance to companies like Delphi. Ms. Granholm had proposed a tax package largely devoted to lowering taxes for manufacturers that led to a negotiated net tax cut for businesses across the board, but that agreement faces a veto because of disputes over parts of the package, most notably whether to keep the single business tax beyond its 2009 repeal date.

"Other states are thriving in the strong national economic climate. The governor needs to work in Lansing to develop solutions that will improve Michigan's economy and create jobs," Rep. Pete Hoekstra, R-Holland said in an Associated Press account.

A spokesperson for U.S. Rep. Mike Rogers (R-Brighton) said the meeting was cordial but that most topics were already in the works, including approval by the U.S. House of legislation creating a trade enforcement prosecutor. Sylvia Warner also said the House has passed improvements to existing law providing federal funds which 33 states have used to create high risk health care insurance pools.

Boy tells court how adoptive parents punished him

Thursday, November 17, 2005

By Ken Kolker
The Grand Rapids Press

GRAND RAPIDS -- Outside the courtroom, a mom accused with her husband of abusing 12 of their adopted children approached the biological mother of half of those children. The biological mother, Dematrice Davis, 29, had lost her six young children after allegations of abuse seven years ago at her home.

"Don't come by me, don't come by me. Don't touch me," Davis, 29, warned Beryl Richards in a corridor at the Kent County Courthouse.

Davis said she learned Monday that Beryl and Jerome Richards of Kentwood, the couple who adopted her children in 2000, were on trial.

The Richardses, former adoptive parents of the year, allegedly beat some of the children with extension cords, belts and shoes, as well as ignored sexual abuse of the younger children, prosecutors said.

A 12-year-old boy adopted in 1999 testified Wednesday he had to remain in uncomfortable positions for hours as punishment. Once, when he drank a bottle of water without permission, he was made to fast for five days, he testified. During that time, he was only able to drink water and eat some food at Sunday church, he testified.

"They just like to make people miserable," said the sixth-grader.

The Richardses have denied abuse and suggested their form of discipline was based on a strong belief in the Bible. The couple is not charged criminally, but the state is trying to terminate their parental rights.

A representative of some of the children suggested Wednesday that the Richardses adopted the children for the money -- the \$100,000 a year they get in state adoption subsidies.

"Did they take these kids due to love?" guardian ad litem Chris Newhouse asked the jury.

On Wednesday, Davis held back tears as a doctor described marks consistent with abuse on some of the children -- on legs, arms, backs, and on the face of one child.

Some of the children had talked of being beaten by the Richardses, the doctor testified. One young girl told doctors she was spanked for wetting the bed.

"They're in a worse predicament now than when they were in my care," Davis said during a break.

For Davis' former children, this kind of fight over abuse and termination of parental rights is nothing new.

Davis was 22 when her first set of twins, then four months old, were hospitalized in 1998 with broken ribs, court records show. One suffered from brain injuries consistent with shaken baby syndrome; the other had blood on the brain from a previous injury. At the time, she had four children.

Police suspected the abuse was done by her live-in boyfriend, on parole on drug and sex charges, but they didn't charge anyone, court records show.

Davis denied involvement and passed a polygraph, according to court records.

But she was uncooperative and pleaded no contest to providing her children with an unsafe home, records show. The state permanently removed the four children and placed them in foster care.

Several months later, Davis gave birth to another set of twins. Based on what happened to her first set of twins, the state took away her babies, records show.

A judge terminated her parental rights to all six children in December 1999.

A year later, the Richardses adopted all six children. They already had five grown children and seven adopted children.

Their attorney, Kevin Cronin, on Wednesday described a couple struggling to deal with the needs of the adopted children.

But abuse, he said, was "contrary to the essence" of the couple. The Richards, he said, are "falsely accused."

They have acknowledged spanking their children with a belt, but nothing else. They said they didn't know about allegations of sexual abuse between some children until prosecutors filed the charges.

Press writer Danielle Quisenberry contributed to this story.

Published November 17, 2005

Teacher gets probation for fondling student Sexton instructor tells courtroom: 'I made a mistake'

By Kelly Hassett
Lansing State Journal

Surrounded by his wife, mother, children and pastor, John Daniel "J.D." Ross on Wednesday apologized for abusing his authority as a Sexton High School teacher and fondling a female student this spring.

"I made a mistake," the 52-year-old Lansing man said as he was sentenced to two years' probation in Ingham County Circuit Court. "It pains me today to have my family have to witness my situation."

Judge Beverley Nettles-Nickerson also ordered Ross to register with the Michigan Sex Offender Registry.

Advertisement

The 25-year Lansing School District veteran faced up to two years in prison after he pleaded guilty in September to fourth-degree criminal sexual conduct, which involves inappropriate touching.

The victim and her father were present in the courtroom but chose not to speak.

Although the student was 17 - above Michigan's age of consent - at the time of the May 10 assault at the school, Ross was charged because he was a teacher and in a position of authority.

Nettles-Nickerson reminded Ross of his long-standing good reputation in the community and said she'd seen many letters of support written on his behalf.

"Through your career you have exemplified the goals of the Lansing School District ... except for this incident," she said.

Until his teaching certificate is suspended - which should happen shortly now that he's been sentenced - Ross still is on unpaid administrative leave but is not allowed to teach, district spokeswoman Roni Rucker Waters said. His conviction will stay on his record with the state Department of Education.

The physical education teacher initially was charged with third-degree criminal sexual conduct - a 15-year felony - but that charge was dropped in exchange for his plea to the lesser charge.

Ross' attorney, Curtis Williams of Detroit, said his client was undergoing counseling to deal with anxiety and depression. "Mr. Ross acknowledges his wrongdoing," he said. Ross "has suffered rather enormously."

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Police pursue unregistered sex offenders statewide

Bay City Times

Thursday, November 17, 2005

Do you know who the convicted rapists and child molesters are among us?

According to the state, we all have a right to that information.

The Michigan Public Sex Offender Registry is supposed to contain the names, photos, addresses and descriptions of most people convicted of sex crimes.

The problem is that too much of the information is outdated.

In Bay City alone, police were seeking 20 men who hadn't reported their addresses as required.

Two of them - each convicted of first-degree criminal sexual conduct, as in forcible rape - had their last-known address at the Parmenter House halfway house at 706 Fifth St. in Bay City.

Staff at the halfway house wouldn't talk about the facility, its residents or the 18-year-olds whom police sought.

Particularly galling is the attitude of the Michigan Department of Human Services, which oversees the halfway house. The department wouldn't tell police about the two because of confidentiality concerns.

That's the same bunch of hooey that the department has hidden behind for decades when asked about any person connected with the department.

In this case, that attitude is dead wrong.

If these two 18-year-olds were prisoners of the Michigan Department of Corrections, their whereabouts would be reported upon anyone's request.

Plus, state law requires juvenile sex offenders to join the Public Sex Offender Registry upon their 18th birthday.

A simple search on the Internet of the Michigan Sex Offender Registry shows exactly which adult sex offenders are living at Parmenter House, 706 Fifth St.

There's your phony confidentiality.

While this halfway house and its overseers stonewalled, police found one of the men living in an apartment in Bay City. The other was in the Oakland County Jail on unrelated charges.

Those convicted of sex felonies are required to report their addresses to police four times a year.

If they don't report an address change, they could face a four-year sentence in prison.

In Bay County's metropolitan Zip codes of 48706, 48708 and 48732, there were 187 sex offenders listed on the state's Internet registry Tuesday.

That information is useful to neighbors and police only if it is accurate.

The recent statewide and local police sweeps are important, to make sure that people know where those convicted of sex crimes are living.

So everyone can beware.

Kind of.

Statewide, police don't have correct information on fully a third of the people who are supposed to be on the registry.

At last count early this month, there were 8,346 sex offenders unaccounted for on a Public Sex Offender Registry that on Nov. 3 had 23,885 people who were supposed to report their addresses.

Police across the state found 846 of the missing.

A tenth of the total.

Not very reassuring.

Especially with state agencies hiding some of that information behind bogus claims of privacy.

When it comes to the Public Sex Offender Registry, there is no privacy.

Period.

Thursday, November 17, 2005

Web glitch cancels Medicare sign-ups

By Sharon Terlep / The Detroit News

Hundreds of Metro Detroit seniors who signed up for one-on-one help in enrolling in the new Medicare drug program had their appointments canceled.

Hot lines from Clinton Township to Washington, D.C., became overloaded with callers forced to wait or leave messages seeking help.

The federal government's Web site offering online enrollment was not operating reliably.

In all, the flurry of technical glitches and the sheer volume of requests conspired to block thousands of Metro Detroiters from signing up for the Medicare prescription drug program rolled out nationally this week.

The program marks the first time seniors and the disabled, including more than 1.5 million in Michigan, can receive prescription medicine through Medicare. While the federal government says the program will cut drug costs in half for a typical beneficiary, to \$1,120 a year, enrolling in the plan is proving to be a daunting task.

Area agencies scheduled events to help confused seniors work through the myriad choices the plan offers. But problems with Medicare's computerized enrollment program led several agencies to cancel help sessions this week.

"It's just killing us to have to cancel these sessions," said Becki Tyler, resource specialist team leader for the Area Agency on Aging 1-B. "The message we're trying to put out there is that people have time."

The deadline to sign up without incurring a penalty is May 15. However, many seniors who either don't have coverage or will lose their coverage at the end of the year are anxious to sign up by Jan. 1, when the benefit takes effect.

Seniors can choose between dozens of plan options - all managed individually by private and nonprofit insurance companies.

At the root of the early problems is the federal government's Web site created to disseminate information and allow people to sign up online.

The site became overwhelmed by traffic Tuesday and was still moving slowly Wednesday.

"We're doing everything we can as quickly as we can," said Peter Ashkenaz, spokesman for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services in Washington. He said Web site problems should be ironed out by today. More than 1 million people visited the site Sunday, up from 190,000 on the same day a year ago, he said. The agency also beefed up service on its toll-free hot line to help with the added demand.

Dozens of local agencies are relying on the government site to help seniors with questions.

Without being able to access the site, answering questions and instructing people on the sign-up process has been tough, if not impossible, for those staffing senior centers, hot lines and informational events.

At least two sessions planned for this week in southeast Michigan to sign up seniors on-site were cancelled after dozens were forced to wait hours at an event Tuesday at Beaumont Hospital.

Wilma Immerfall said she'll need help from an expert before she chooses a plan. "You don't know who to talk to or who to see," said Immerfall, 85, of Canton, who has no prescription coverage. She spends about \$100 a month on medication. "I don't know what I'm going to do." Finding a time to reschedule before next year is tough because help sessions are mostly booked through the year, Tyler said. Seniors who call the Area Agency on Aging's hot line may have to wait days or weeks for help as workers prioritize cases, trying first to reach those who will have no coverage after Jan. 1.

For now, the sign-up sessions organized by agency sites are scheduled to start up again in the tri-county area Nov. 29.

"Maybe there's hope and things will start working out soon," said Chris Kenzie of the Senior Alliance, which is also called the Area Agency on Aging 1C.

The phone lines were swamped at the agency Wednesday, with volunteers and staffers rushing to answer questions, Kenzie said.

"The information on the Web site is unavailable and incomplete and up and down in different places - it's clearly a work in progress," said Robert M. Hayes, president of the Medicare Rights Center based in New York. "We're just telling people to take a deep breath and hold on."

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Thursday, November 17, 2005

Congress should kill confusing drug benefit Seniors can't figure out plan; nation can't pay for it

Detroit News Editorial

Senior citizens are getting a firsthand look this week at the new Medicare prescription drug benefit, and what they're seeing is a bewildering plan that likely falls well short of their expectations.

Sign-up started Tuesday. The multilayered requirements and options are so confusing many must seek outside guidance. Hotlines and advice seminars are so overwhelmed that one area agency is trying to regroup and schedule more seminars before the benefit goes into effect in January. Congress should seize on the lukewarm response the program is getting from its potential beneficiaries and kill the drug benefit before it goes into effect.

The nation can't afford this broad, new senior entitlement. The federal deficit stands above \$300 billion and does not factor in the ongoing cost of the war in Iraq. Also unaccounted for is the cost of rebuilding the Southern states hit by the recent hurricanes.

The drug benefit will place another \$84 billion demand on the budget during the next two years, with no plan for paying for it.

Even without the drug benefit, Medicare faces a long-term deficit of \$15 trillion to \$20 trillion. The prescription program will add \$8 trillion to that.

It's insanity to layer on costly benefits to a program that won't cover its existing obligations. By stubbornly sticking to the drug benefit, the Bush administration is guaranteeing future tax hikes.

"Absent any changes, by 2008 financing Medicare would require a tax increase whose total cost would equal nearly 25 percent of wages," says Michael F. Cannon of the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank in Washington, D.C.

Instead of adding benefits to Medicare, Congress ought to be slashing the entitlement to head off a future crisis.

The bill for the drug plan will only go up, as employers shift the cost of retiree drug plans to Medicare. Business is expected to reap a \$44 billion windfall over 10 years by offloading retiree benefits onto the government, in addition to the \$150 billion in direct subsidies for corporations that were built-in to the program.

The Medicare drug benefit started out as a way to help needy seniors pay for medicine. It has become yet another broad entitlement, enjoyed by rich and poor seniors alike.

If allowed to go into effect, it will push the nation that much closer to financial calamity.

Drug benefit plan choices confuse seniors

Listen to the elders complain about their new Medicare drug benefit. You'd think that for \$724 billion over 10 years, the taxpayers could have bought them more happiness.

But no, they are angry over the program's complexity. They must choose among dozens of plans. The plans cover different drugs and charge different premiums, deductibles and co-payments.

Such was not the vision of the free-market swingers who created this extravaganza of confusion. They opposed adding a simple "one-size-fits-all" drug benefit onto the existing Medicare program. In-



FROMA HARROP

stead, they would lead Medicare's 43 million beneficiaries into the promised land of choice.

Only 39 percent of older Americans can figure out the options, according to a survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation and the Harvard School of Public Health. The questionnaire also found that 37

percent were simply not going to sign up.

That's what happens when people are overwhelmed by choice, according to Barry Schwartz, author of "The Paradox of Choice: Why More Is Less." They don't make a choice. They opt out.

"The only good thing about this plan is it's better than nothing," says Schwartz, a professor of psychology at Swarthmore College. "So if you have nothing, you can throw a dart and you're better off."

Froma Harrop writes for the Providence Journal. Her column is distributed by Creators Syndicate.

Let's talk about sex Program working to reduce teen pregnancies urges parents: Give your kids the scoop before pop culture does

Thursday, November 17, 2005

BY JO COLLINS MATHIS
Ann Arbor News Staff Reporter

Children need to talk about these issues with their parents or they'll look elsewhere for answers, said facilitator Charmagne Johnson, a nurse and health educator from Detroit.

"You are your child's first and No. 1 educator," said Johnson. "Keeping the door of communication open is the thing that's going to help us most."

She encouraged the parents to look for opportunities to discuss sexuality because if they wait for the perfect time, it'll never happen.

Johnson said she likes to talk about sex to her teenagers while they're a captive audience in the car. Others said they take advantage of times their children are engrossed in an activity so it seems more natural.

Aldin Reeves of Ypsilanti, a mother of four, likes to bring up the topic while she's styling her daughter's hair because she knows she won't hop up before it's done.

"It makes it a little easier if you're at the back of their head," she said.

Her husband, Ray, talks to their son about it while they're playing video games.

He said he learned Wednesday that he needs to talk to his 11-year-old daughter, as well.

"It's easier to have the conversation with my son," he said. "I'm terrified. I was hoping it could be five ... 10 ... 16 years from now."

Johnson assured him that he is the most important man in his daughter's life and that he mustn't avoid the talk, lest she look elsewhere. She said his daughter needed to know his values.

"Speaking from experience," she said, "I never wanted to hurt my father in any way."

Reeves later said that he'd probably take his daughter out shopping so they could talk.

"But I wish they could stay young forever," he said.

Kitty Heiss, district nurse for Lincoln Consolidated Schools, strongly supports the idea of talking early and often.

"The older the kids get, the more difficult they are to talk to, or the less willing they are to listen," she said.

Heiss said she started talking about sex to her daughter, Ashley, a senior at Lincoln High School, when she was in the fifth grade.

Her response?

"I don't even like boys! Why should I hear this?"

"I told her she's growing up, she needs to hear this stuff, and some day she'll be glad we talked about this!" Heiss said, with a laugh.

Research shows that children who learn about sex from their parents are less likely to become sexually active and more likely to use protection when they do, said Kathy Fahl, director of education at Planned Parenthood, Mid-Michigan Alliance.

"I think you should start talking with kids from very early on in an age-appropriate way about sexuality, body rights and responsibility, gender equality and making responsible choices," Fahl said. "If we can start parents talking early about age-appropriate things, when it gets to the hard things in middle school, like dating and relationships and premarital sex, kids are more likely to go to their parents. They're comfortable. Parents are comfortable."

"If parents haven't talked at all to their children and now they feel they need to, they want to, because they want to protect their child, it's really hard," Fahl said. "For both of them."

TETO fell perfectly into the goals and objectives that Willow Run Community Schools' Reproductive Health Advisory Committee set last year, said Lori Day, the district's school nurse.

"One of the goals the committee set was to offer programs for parents related to reproductive health issues," said Day. "So when this came along, I jumped on it."

Johnson reminded parents that the media is saturated with sexual messages that affect their behavior.

A recent study by the Kaiser Family Foundation found that the number of sexual scenes on TV has doubled in the last seven years, and Johnson noted that no matter what time of day the TV is turned on, shows are likely to have sexual content.

Some parents said they watch such shows with their teenagers in order to discuss such things as premarital sex, and share their values.

Donna Bow-Cook of Ypsilanti said she and her 11-year-old daughter Delana have had some very productive conversations while watching a television show about childbirth. It's been a great way to comfortably talk about such issues as unplanned pregnancies and single motherhood, she said. Delana's reaction? "I don't want to go through that!"

Johnson noted the following statistics which could be good fodder for discussion among parents and children:

One in five adolescents has had sexual intercourse before the age of 15.

Relationships with a partner who is older by two or more years are much more likely to include sexual intercourse.

Teens who watch a lot of television with sexual content are more likely to initiate intercourse in the following year. The average American teen watches three hours of TV a day.

Young people who start drinking at an early age are more likely to start having sex too.

Overall closeness between parents and their children, shared activities, parental presence in the home, and parental caring and concern are all associated with a reduced risk of early sex and teen pregnancy.

State child care ratings don't ensure safety

Parental checking on facilities remains best way to find good care

The Detroit News

November 17, 2005

Finding reputable child care is not easy and remains one of the most important decisions parents make to help their children develop. But a plan to create a rating system in the state won't make that critical decision markedly easier and could encourage parents to do less checking than they would otherwise.

The \$17 million system being promoted by the Early Childhood Investment Corp., a public/private partnership created last year by Gov. Jennifer Granholm to focus on early childhood issues, has yet to be approved and needs to be scrutinized.

Child care centers would be given a rating between one and three stars, and eventually be able to earn up to five stars. But it's unclear how they would achieve higher ratings, when they would be reviewed or how the state would monitor how facilities promote their ratings, especially those that are downgraded.

Such things as complaints and citations as well as staff training and the number of employees with early childhood education degrees would be factored into the rating system, which is good. But most of those things already are available to parents who do their due diligence and ask those questions before enrolling their children in a program.

Aside from the excessive cost, the nearly 18,000 child care centers in the state already are required to be licensed. When properly administered and regularly verified, licensing is supposed to give parents the assurance that a center is safe for their children.

It is also unlikely that child care center inspectors would be able to adequately review each facility yearly, which is needed to ensure the rating system is up to date and accurate. Even adding another 180 inspectors -- as is being proposed -- won't likely clear the system of the existing backlog that will mount with added responsibilities.

A rating system won't ensure safety and could instill a false sense of security in parents. The best way to find good child care is by visiting facilities, asking about teachers' educational qualifications and experience and talking to other parents. Relying on the government to do that is a bad idea.

Day care do's and don'ts
Before leaving your children with day care providers:

- Ask for references and call them.
- Find out about security systems and emergency plans.
- Ask to see a copy of their license.
- Find out how long teachers have worked there.
- How many are CPR certified?
- Visit the state's Web site at www.michigan.gov/dhs

Parents urged to read to kids

Thursday, November 17, 2005

By Matt Vande Bunte

The Grand Rapids Press

ROCKFORD -- While teachers may be responsible for reading, 'riting and 'rithmetic, Bonnie Visser suggests that parents tutor their children with three R's of their own: Rhyme, rhythm and repetition.

Those are the keys to helping preschoolers learn literacy, the reading specialist at Valley View Elementary School said. Visser joined other Rockford reading teachers last week for a workshop on how to prepare children for school.

"I don't think parents always understand that they're the prime model for their children's development," Visser said. "Some say you can even be reading when the child is in the womb."

Visser talked about how parents can develop their children's literacy through play. Shelly Vermeulen, a specialist at Crestwood Elementary, emphasized that parents can help their children learn sounds by talking with them about everyday things. Stacie Gregory, a specialist at Roguewood Elementary, said parents can teach reading concepts to children by sharing a book with them every night.

The common thread is parents spending time with their children, Visser said.

That means singing and dancing with each other, and acting out nursery rhymes.

"Make sure you are talking and communicating and reading to them," she said. "Children who are not read to and who are not talked to come to us with limited (literacy) experiences."

Charlevoix man accused of taking shot at his wife

By Steve Zucker News-Review staff writer

Wednesday, November 16, 2005 2:17 PM EST

CHARLEVOIX - A Charlevoix man who police say took a shot at his wife with a revolver earlier this week was arraigned Tuesday on two criminal charges.

Gary Lee Brodin, 62, is facing one count each of assault with intent to do great bodily harm less than murder, a 10-year felony; and possession of a firearm while intoxicated, a misdemeanor. He was not charged with assault with intent to murder - a charge punishable by up to life in prison - as reported in Tuesday's edition. That report was based on information in a police news release.

The charges stem from an incident that took place at Brodin's home on Klooster Road in Marion Township at about 6 p.m. Monday.

Police said Brodin's wife said she and Brodin were having a verbal dispute when Brodin took a shot at her with a .357 revolver. The woman, who was not injured, said she fled the home and drove to the sheriff's department for help.

According to a police affidavit filed in the case, when deputies returned to the house they found a highly intoxicated Brodin sitting in his car. After some coaxing, Brodin allegedly got out of the car and then showed police the bullet hole in the wall and where he had been sitting at the time of the incident.

Brodin remains lodged at the Charlevoix County Jail today, Wednesday, in lieu of a \$30,000 cash or surety bond. He is scheduled to face a preliminary examination on the charges at 3 p.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 29, in 90th District Court.

Agency pleads for heating help

HOLLY TOWNSHIP

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Thursday, November 17, 2005

By Marlon Vaughn

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HOLLY TWP. - It could be a long, cold winter for local agencies that help low-income residents with heating bills.

Officials from Neighbor for Neighbor, a Davisburg-based agency that provides food, utilities help and rent assistance, pleaded its case Tuesday at the Holly Township Board meeting for some of the federal block grant money board members are allocating for 2006-07.

With heating bills predicted to rise about 40 percent this winter, the agency and its clients need all the help they can get, executive director Ruth Karash said.

"You know heating bills are going up this year," Karash said. "People are never going to meet their bills."

Deanna Sheridan of Holly is one of them. She earns about \$10 an hour as a retail clerk and says she can barely keep her bills paid now.

"Between gas and everything else, I don't have anything left over," she said. "If the heat bills go way up, I won't be able to afford them."

Neighbor for Neighbor assists families in Holly, Groveland, Springfield and Rose Townships, and in the village of Holly. It receives funding from Springfield Township, and has requested assistance from Groveland and Holly Townships.

Dale Smith, Holly Township supervisor, said the agency would definitely be considered for the next round of block grant awards.

Karash said most of the agency's clients earn \$7-\$8 an hour and simply won't be able to afford the higher heating bills this winter. The agency has traditionally averaged about 40 families a week, but that figure is up to about 70 a week, officials said.

"We have lots of people living in homes that are not well-insulated, and lots of elderly and handicapped," she said. "And whereas we can deal with turning the heat down, many of these people can't."

Neighbor for Neighbor, a volunteer-run agency, has distributed about 60 tons of food and provided more than \$9,000 each in utility and eviction-prevention assistance over the past year. The rising heating costs and sluggish Michigan economy add up to a much greater need this winter, Karash said.

Complicating matters is the fact that Neighbor for Neighbor's food program got a substantial portion of its funding from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which is stretched thin by the recovery from Hurricane Katrina and other natural disasters.

"It's been a devastating year for us," Karash said.

Panelists to offer advice on home heating assistance

HOMETOWN HEADLINES

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Thursday, November 17, 2005

By Marjory Raymer
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A special town hall meeting of the Anti-Violence Task Force today will feature advice on home heating assistance.

Rep. Brenda Clack, D-Flint, will host the meeting 6 p.m. today at Church on the ROC, 2518 Delaware St. in Flint.

It will include guest panelists from Consumers Energy and area agencies, who will discuss programs available to help residents with home heating costs.

Love INC needs meat for holidays

Thursday, November 17, 2005

By Janet Meana
The Grand Rapids Press

ALLENDALE TOWNSHIP -- The staff at Love in the Name of Christ is already thinking about Christmas.

The deadline for families requesting holiday assistance is Nov. 28, and the deadline for donations is Dec. 2.

Director Paula Huyser said the organization's biggest need this year is for meat for a Christmas meal.

"Most people don't go out and buy a ham and bring it here," she said.

Last year, a local church took a special collection for the purchase of meat. This year, no one has stepped forward, but Huyser said she is not too worried.

"It'll come together," she said.

Huyser expects Love INC to help 50 to 60 families this year, about the same as last year.

Besides fixings for a Christmas dinner, each family will receive a stock of personal-care items, a Christian family video or DVD, socks and toys for children.

Toys for Tots supplies gifts for young children, but not for teens. So, one of Love INC's needs is gifts for teenagers -- such as Walkman radios, cassette and CD players, sports equipment or \$10 to \$15 gift certificates for Target.

Parents will be able to come to Love INC and select gifts for their children.

Also needed are Christian family videos or DVDs and socks in all sizes for teens and children.

The Allendale school district is holding a food drive this week, and Allendale Christian School will hold its annual drive for personal-care items the Wednesday before Thanksgiving.

"Every year, I'm amazed at the generosity of the community," Huyser said.

The Salvation Army in Holland is a clearing house for families in need. When someone applies for assistance, his or her name and address is faxed to the Salvation Army to ensure that services aren't duplicated. Families in Love INC's budgeting classes are automatically considered for assistance, as are those who were helped last year.

"Some families are still struggling," Huyser said.

This year, the Salvation Army, which has Spanish-speaking staff, is helping translate for Hispanic families to see if they qualify for assistance. Huyser said she expects 10 to 15 families will be eligible.

www.lsj.com

OUR TOWNS

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MID-MICHIGAN

3B

Thursday

NOVEMBER 17, 2005

Greater Lansing Food Bank hopes to raise \$700,000

The Greater Lansing Food Bank kicks off its annual envelope campaign today at Cristo Rey Community Center. People are asked to use the envelopes to make monetary contributions to support the Food Bank, which has helped more than 1 million people in need of emergency food over the past 24 years.

This year's goal is to raise \$700,000.

High unemployment, rising energy costs and impending cuts to the Food Stamp program are all expected to increase the demand for the Food Bank's services this year. It currently serves about 5,000 people a month.



Building Hope Awards recognize efforts of volunteers

By JACKIE LEONE Argus-Press Copy Desk Chief

Wednesday, November 16, 2005 10:22 AM EST

The Shiawassee County Homeless Resolution Task Force recognized “dedicated men and women of the Shiawassee County community who offer hope to individuals and families facing homelessness” Thursday afternoon during its fourth annual Building Hope Award ceremony.

This year's recipients were: The Salvation Army, Community Organization; Senator Valde Garcia, Public official; Dr. David Huff, Faith Based Representative; Sue Zuniga of Capital Area Community Services, Agency Staff Person; Dana Cook of CACS, Community Volunteer; Jackie Kline of Relief After Violent Encounter, Community Volunteer; and Jackie Leone of The Argus-Press, Special Award.

Renita Mikolajczyk, executive director of Shiawassee United Way, was mistress of ceremonies for the event, which was hosted by The Lebowsky Center and co-sponsored by the task force and Chemical Bank and Trust.

Throughout the program, she read stories written by Shiawassee County men, women, children and families who are homeless. They were displayed on silhouette cutouts.

Alluding to the latest point in time survey, which she said counted 42 people - homeless and another 147 precariously housed - Mikolajczyk said the latter category is “one smidgen away from a circumstance or problem that will put them over the edge and they will become homeless.”

James VanDusen, the new executive director of The Salvation Army Owosso Service Center, offered opening remarks. He said in researching his talk on the Internet, he found an article about a previous point in time survey in which only one homeless person was identified.

He said the article challenged what was found by that homeless census, but in his opinion, “If one person is homeless in Shiawassee County, then we have a job to do.”

He went on to say, “To most people, the homeless are nameless, faceless people they don't see or don't want to deal with. I'm thankful there are organizations like these (involved in the task force). It's hard work, but rewarding work, and if you help one mom or family, when you walk out at the end of the day, you're feeling good about yourself.”

Argus-Press Photo/Cheryll Warren RECIPIENTS of this year's Building Hope Awards are, from the left, Jackie Leone, The Argus-Press, Special Award; Jeannie Gauna, accepting for Jackie Kline, Relief After Violent Encounter, Community Volunteer Award; Leeann Huff, accepting for Dr. David Huff, Faith Based Representative Award; Sue Zuniga, Capital Area Community Services, Agency Staff Person Award; Dana Cook, Capital Area Community Services, Community Volunteer Award; State Senator Valde Garcia (R-22nd Dist. Howell), Public Official Award; and Jim VanDusen, The Salvation Army, Community Organization Award. Building Hope Awards are presented each year to individuals in the community who offer hope to individuals and families facing homelessness.

Mikolajczyk presented the Community Organization Award to The Salvation Army, with VanDusen accepting.

In its efforts to prevent homelessness, she said, The Salvation Army assists people needing food, clothing and shelter, operates a soup kitchen, provides food vouchers and provides hotel vouchers to burned-out families.

Standing in for her husband, Rev. David Woodby, Harriet Woodby presented the Faith Based Representative award to Leeann Huff, standing in for her husband, Dr. David Huff.

Woodby said she felt the absence of the two men and their wives acting in their behalf was significant because, "As a doctor's wife and a minister's wife, we know from behind the scenes how many people there are out there who need help, need food and clothing."

Dr. Huff conducts a medical clinic at Redeemer Lutheran Church for four hours each Saturday morning. During those clinics, Woodby said, Dr. Huff "dispenses advice, love, God's word and blesses in ways you can't imagine. It is tremendous work that he does and it doesn't bother him that the people are not paying for office calls. We're proud and appreciative."

In State Sen. Valde Garcia's (R-Howell) absence, immediate past city of Owosso Mayor Jack Davis reversed his role as presenter and accepted the award on Garcia's behalf, counting off Garcia's efforts on behalf of the homeless as a legislator.

Davis said that during his tenure as mayor, he participated in conducting several point in time homeless censuses. He said he worked closely with the Owosso Police Department in dealing with the homeless and they would go into known habitation areas late at night, about 9 or 10 p.m., and conduct head counts, noting, "In the summer the numbers were higher; in the colder months it was lower."

Davis credited police officers with helping the homeless and helping them get help and temporary shelter.

"I'm very proud of the police department and their work with the homeless," Davis said.

Later, when Garcia arrived, Davis made the formal presentation.

Greg Kopicko presented the Agency Staff Person award to Sue Zuniga, noting that during the year she has worked with the homeless, she has helped many people in the county.

"Sue has grown and learned since assuming her position and I hope she will stay a part of our team," Kopicko said.

For the first time, two Community Volunteer awards were presented.

Capital Area Community Services Owosso Service Center Coordinator Rebecca Zemla presented Dana Cook, also with CACS, with her award.

During the last three years, Zemla said, Cook has been instrumental in raising more than \$8,000 a year through the Walk for Warmth campaign, funds from which help families and individuals with direct financial assistance for heating costs.

“Dana's energy and concern for the low-income and elderly in this county is unsurpassed,” Zemla said.

In the absence of Jackie Kline, Jeannie Gauna of RAVE accepted Kline's award from Jody Smith, RAVE executive director.

Relating that Kline came to RAVE as a Baker College intern “loaded with enthusiasm and a wonderful manner with clients and staff,” Smith said that when Kline's internship ended, she became a volunteer and, as her particular interest was children, she organized a children's program and also “helps out with many different things - kind, necessary and essential things. She does a terrific job.”

Pastor Russell Merrill of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Corunna said the invocation and an informal reception followed the awards ceremony.

Detroit Free Press letters to the editor

FROM OUR READERS:

November 17, 2005

Reach out to homeless youths

Gov. Jennifer Granholm has declared Nov. 13-19 Homeless Awareness Week. It is a time when we should be especially aware of the homeless children, youth and young adults in our community.

It is a staggering number: 3,000-5,000 youths are homeless in Michigan. Many have been neglected, abused and abandoned by people who were supposed to care about them. Too often, these young people are forgotten because they are invisible. They dwell in abandoned buildings, parks and at freeway underpasses.

At Covenant House Michigan, our mission is to help these young people break the cycle of homelessness and build new beginnings. We provide shelter, food, clothing and educational and vocational programs.

Please take a moment this week to reflect on the thousands of people in our community who are homeless and hopeless. They need our help.

Sam G. Joseph

Executive Director

Covenant House Michigan

The Grand Rapids Press

Letters

November 17, 2005

Remember the victims

I was horrified when I read "Marked for life," the article about inmates sentenced while minors to life without parole. Horrified that anyone would think these animals should be allowed a second chance.

Reading the accompanying "fact sheet" delineating the heinous nature of their crimes was the stuff of nightmares.

Many folks grow up in less than ideal circumstances without resorting to this kind of barbarity. How about the adage: "You do the crime; you do the time." No excuses. Remember the victims. Protect the public. Lock them up forever.

SANDRA QUICK/East Grand Rapids

Greater Kalamazoo United Way close to fund goal

Thursday, November 17, 2005

Gazette Staff Reports

Greater Kalamazoo United Way officials said Wednesday they have raised \$8.59 million, or 83.5 percent, of their \$10.29 million annual fund-raising goal.

John Haworth, annual campaign director for the GKUW, said, "Although we remain optimistic, we cannot stress enough that we are not there yet." Results of the campaign will be announced at 5:30 p.m. today at Fetzer Center on Western Michigan University's campus.

The local United Way is the third largest in Michigan, ranking only behind Detroit and Grand Rapids. The GKUW has successfully met or exceeded its community campaign goal every year since 1989.

For every \$1 that's given, 89 cents goes to programs that meet needs in the local community. The remaining 11 cents goes to administrative and cost overheads, GKUW officials said.

GKUW funds 64 programs administered by 43 member agencies. The organization targets six areas of basic need: health care, strengthening families, coping with crisis, increasing self-sufficiency, youth development and community building.

GKUW's fund-raising effort comes on the heels of the announcement of The Kalamazoo Promise -- a scholarship program unveiled last week by a group of anonymous donors that offers graduates of the Kalamazoo Public Schools up to 100 percent of their tuition and fees paid for at any Michigan public university or community college.

"As we have all been appropriately impressed with the incredible vision and gift made in The Kalamazoo Promise, the United Way's annual campaign, this community's campaign, is an ongoing promise," said Eric Dewey, president and CEO of the Greater Kalamazoo United Way. With pledges still coming in, Pfizer Corp. continues to be the largest single contributor. Retirees and employees have already set a record by giving \$1.66 million, Dewey said.

The Pfizer Foundation will match the amount from Pfizer employees and retirees. The company should exceed \$3.32 million, Dewey said.

Pfizer and its predecessors, the Pharmacia Corp. and The Upjohn Co., have been important mainstays for United Way campaigns. Since 1998, giving from Pfizer employees, retirees and corporate matches have contributed more than \$19.6 million to the GKUW's community campaign.

Dewey said Pfizer continues its support despite a sluggish Michigan economy and an announcement by the company this summer that 500 jobs in the pharmaceutical sciences would be lost in the Kalamazoo area.

Dewey said Pfizer employees not only give financially but also of their time. About 425 Pfizer employees have participated in 32 Days of Caring volunteerism projects across the Kalamazoo area this year.

United Way drive still needs your help this year

Muskegon Chronicle

Thursday, November 17, 2005

All of us are looking forward to a warm and healthy holiday season in the safety of our homes and families. Yet these are impossible luxuries for some of our neighbors. Still, you can make all the difference, thanks to United Way. This season, all of us in West Michigan need the agency -- and your caring -- more than ever.

Currently, United Way of Muskegon County, which by the way will be combining forces with United Way of Oceana County, is moving into the final phase of its 2005 fund-raising campaign. Arguably, this has been one of the more difficult years for the organization.

For starters, many of the agencies under the United Way umbrella have been hit hard with cases of need not only here locally, but across the United States. Hurricane Katrina is still a bad dream for the multitudes who survived its deadly flooding, tearing winds and brutal aftermath, and helping our Southern neighbors has taxed the resources of such groups as the American Red Cross, which is just one of many United Way agencies.

We are not exaggerating when we say that it has given its all to lend aid and support to the homeless, grieving and stricken in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast region. No one here could ever begrudge such selfless efforts. Heaven help us if ever such a catastrophe strikes us in Michigan, but we know for a certainty that the Red Cross will be there with its last dollar and last ounce of energy to bring us through such a mortal tragedy.

This year, too, has seen many struggle with a tough economy worsened by a tight fist on the state budget. Families at or below the poverty level throughout West Michigan will be struggling this season to make ends meet, feed and clothe themselves and their children, and heat their homes in the dead of winter.

Among these individuals will be some who may have lost their jobs or have seen their income cut through no fault of their own. Businesses in our area like Brunswick, Electrolux, Dana and Sappi Fine Paper have all let go many terrific and dedicated employees. Those same workers have given generously in the past from their paychecks to help United Way and its affiliated agencies. Now, they themselves are in need of help, and United Way is trying to make up the donation gap once filled by these lost friends.

That's where our local heroes -- YOU -- come in. Thanks to your generosity, the United Way targets set for this year aren't out of reach. Many of you have answered the call to give when asked. You can do no more. For those who are considering giving, or upping their annual or weekly contributions, however, we ask you to do so. Every quarter extra that you give per week adds up. Every dollar more you pledge fills a need. Together, all of our helping hands to our neighbors will make a huge difference in their lives.

In this difficult and troubling holiday season, please help United Way. Please make a difference. Be a hero.

Care agency moves

Thursday, November 17, 2005

The Grand Rapids Press

GRAND RAPIDS -- Lutheran Social Services of Michigan is relocating its headquarters from Grandville to downtown Grand Rapids. The agency's foster care, refugee resettlement and refugee employment services will occupy the third floor of 207 E. Fulton St., in a building owned by First United Methodist Church. The move is expected to be completed in December. Next year, the agency's vocational English training classes for refugees will move from 28th Street to the downtown location.

FARMINGTON HILLS

Center seeks gifts for needy families

St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center is asking Metro Detroiters to help make Christmas bright for the babies and children in its young parents program. The center has seen a shortage of donors for its Christmas Giving Program this year. The "Adopt-a-Family" program allows families and children in need to select four gifts, valued at a maximum of \$25 each. They then are matched with donors, who purchase the gifts and drop them off at the center. In addition to the young parents program, this year, the center has added needy families from the Brightmoor area of Detroit. Those interested in adopting a family for Christmas should contact (248) 626-7527, Ext. 3118.

Detroit Free Press letters to the editor

November 17, 2005

Keep tax cuts; help the hungry

I do not want to be on the receiving end of a tax cut if it means a single mother in Detroit loses her food stamps or a low-income senior is kicked off Medicaid.

My children don't know what hunger feels like. Why should anyone else's child go hungry so that at tax time, I have extra spending money?

You don't have to be of a religious mind-set to see the moral gap looms large here. So, to Congress: Don't cut my taxes. Keep the money. Use it to fully fund food stamps and Medicaid. There are plenty of hungry people in the world. You can bet the wealthy are not among them.

Lori Eaton
Birmingham